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**Editorial: Only one way forward**

In the context of unjustifiable aggression by Israeli against the Palestinian nation, with international bias and the alliance of most of the world with Israel, the Palestinian nation has faced some of its most tragic and bloodiest moments, with Palestinians turning against each other and killing each other in a moment of chaos, deepening even further the wounds and grief of the Palestinian people.

In the midst of these atrocities originating both from within and without the Palestinian community, we must affirm that under no circumstances is it acceptable for Palestinians to shed the blood of other Palestinians. Victory is not won through the conquest of territory, but by sustaining life. The only way through this difficult period of time, therefore, is to unite our voices as one nation.

**Bethlehem welcomes Christmas with tears**  
**Abdul-Salam Al-Rimawi, Ramallah**

Christmas this years approaches during a more difficult political and economic period of time than anything experienced in the past, especially by the Holy City of Bethlehem, the City of Jesus Christ. Bethlehem, like all other Palestinian districts, suffers under Israeli closure, surrounded by Israeli military tanks and modern weaponry. This reality prevents Christians from other Palestinian districts, and Christian tourists, from visiting the city and participating in the Christmas mass.

In its latest invasion of the city, Israeli tanks have indiscriminately targeted civilian homes, the infrastructure of tourism, hotels and the plaza of the Nativity Church, greatly affecting children's

psychological well being. In light of this, the Christmas message this year has been dedicated to children, hoping to bring them happiness, safety and relief from the daily fear and trauma.

The total number of martyrs in Bethlehem district -- those killed by Israeli military forces -- has reached 60 since the beginning of the Intifada. Sixty of them were killed during the most recent invasion of the district. Hundreds were injured and thousands of homes were damaged.

Mr. Hanna Nasir, Bethlehem's mayor, explained the regrettable condition in which this year's feast approaches, saying that Bethlehem lacks any kind of peace, joy, safety or love. He also stated his view that Israel is going to prevent Chairman Yaser Arafat from attending the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, stating that "if Israel really forbids Mr. Arafat from participating in Christmas mass, the whole world will then realize Israel's false claims of assuring people's freedom of worship and right to access to holy sites."

He added that Bethlehem is facing economic stagnation, the loss over just the past ten days is estimated at between 12 to 14 million US dollars, which is a huge amount consider Bethlehem's population of just 28,000 people. Unemployment rates have risen to 40-50% in Bethlehem district since most people depend on tourism for their living and the situation has discouraged tourists from coming this year. How many tourists are interested in visiting a devastated area, with burned hotels and destroyed streets, with psychologically and economically devastated people?

**Bush freezes the accounts of the Holy Land Fund:  
Orphans, students and the poor suffer the consequences  
Juthoor Likhadamat Al-Sahafiyeh, Gaza**

George W. Bush's decision to freeze the bank accounts of the Holy Land Fund has deprived thousands of innocent children and Palestinian families from a secure and respectable living. Mr. Bush said that believes these funds are used to support the children of Palestinian militants from Hamas and Al-Jihad Al-Islami who engage in "suicide attacks" against Israeli targets.

Nuha Tarazi, a 45-year-old Christian woman from Gaza, is a mother of five. Her husband has been bedridden for years and the family depends on the support provided to her by the Holy Land Fund. Her daughter Rana states: "The Holy Land Fund didn't classify me as a Christian or a Moslem. I registered just like thousands of other poor families and orphans, and I was later sent a letter stating that an American family has agreed to adopt me financially". Similarly, Bashar Al-Khoury, a five-year-old from Gaza has been deprived of the Fund's support. His father died as the result of an illness and left behind a family in desperate need of support. The Holy Land Fund has helped them for years, but now they fear for the future. At a demonstration protesting the U.S.'s decision, Bashar carried a banner reading, "I am a Christian benefiting from the Holy Land Fund, please do not deprive me of this blessing!" Hasan Abu-Kweik, a young honors student at university, will now be unable to continue his education; the freezing of the funds of the Holy Land Fund will mean the end of his academic life. There are 110 students that will be deprived of education as a result of Bush's decision.

Does Mr. Bush understand the consequences of his decision? Is he aware that he is going to drive thousands of Palestinian orphans, poor and students from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan to the streets to become beggars and thieves?

Mr. Muhammad Abu Muharram, Holy Land Fund Gaza Office Director, explained that from October 2000 to October 2001 the Holy Land Fund provided financial support to the amount of 4,574 million US Dollars. This amount covered monthly payments to poor families, families devastated as a result of the political situation, children of those killed during the Intifada, and provided medical equipment for hospitals and the disabled. Also, the Fund supported units for the desalination of water in schools, university scholarships, and financial and material support to families whose homes have been demolished as a result of Israeli aggression. The organization also provides free medical days for people.

Freezing the savings of the Holy Land Fund increases the suffering of thousands in Palestine who have depended on the Fund for their livelihood, especially now that the economic situation has been stagnant throughout the past year and left a large percentage of the Palestinian nation unemployed.

**Who killed this little girl?  
Kamelat Al-Shu'ur, Hebron**

Wi'am, an 8-year-old Palestinian girl from Hebron, was found dead in a cardboard box next to the road after disappearing for two days. She had been attacked, brutally raped and choked to death. The motives behind her death and the identity of her killer are still unknown. A suspect has been arrested and an investigation is underway, but the media failed to cover this story.

Where are the organizations dealing with children in these circumstances; why is nothing done to protect these innocent children and defend their rights? The director of an organization dealing with children's issues "advises" that "nothing should be written about this event because it is not the norm and had never happened before." He also added that such occurrences are usually addressed at the family level and no one has the right to interfere since it is a situation impacting "honor". A journalist colleague of mine told me that he had written a full report on the story, but then withdrew it before publication because he felt it is a disgraceful event that brings shame to our nation. "How can we glorify political martyrs as heroes, at one moment, and realize that we have perverts in our society raping and killing innocent children, at another?" he said.

And in this way, Wi'am has been killed twice. Once when she was raped, tortured, killed and thrown on the road, another time, when children's organizations failed to protect and defend her issue.

**Twenty-seven elderly Palestinians have been killed on the streets  
Amin Abu-Wardeh, Nablus**

The International Human Friends Organization, which is located in Vienna, has stated that during the period 28/9/2000 - 8/12/2001 twenty-seven elderly Palestinians have been killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers or as a result of their actions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,. This Organization considers the killing of civilians, demolishing their homes and fields, and imposing a closure around their cities and towns as a proof to Israel's systematic and planned aggression, which violates international treaties, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention, that states that civilians must be protected in times of war. The Organization demands the following: (1) disarming of Israeli settlers, (2) US intervention and pressuring of Israel to stop using American weapons to commit atrocities against the Palestinian nation. The following table indicates the names and conditions under which these elderly Palestinian men and women were killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Living Place</b>	<b>Date Killed</b>	<b>Details</b>
'Eid Kabaha	71	Barta'a, Jenin	8/12/2001	Died at an Israeli blockade at the entrance to Jenin after being denied passage to the hospital.
Ibrahim Musa Ghalamy	80	Beit Foreek, Nablus area	29/11/2001	Intentionally run over by an Israeli settler from the Alon Moreh Settlement, at the entrance to Beit Foreek.
Ibrahim Suleiman As'ad	70	Al-Maghazi Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip	18/11/2001	Died six weeks after being shot by an Israeli soldier while in his front yard. He was shot in the stomach.
Yousef Al-Sheikh 'Abed	65	Nur Shams Refugee Camp, Tulkarem	22/10/2001	Died from an Israeli tank shell at his house. Two of his daughters were also injured.
'Abdulatif Hasan Radwan	65	'Azzoun	22/9/2001	Died at an Israeli blockade near his town on his way to the hospital suffering a heart attack. He choked to death when exposed to tear gas and then prevented from crossing the blockade.
Sa'diyyeh Al-Bakri	70	Um Al-Sharayet, Al-Bireh	16/9/2001	Died as a result of the Israeli invasion by tanks and helicopters in the area where she lived.
Mustafa 'Ali Al-Zibri (PFLP General Secretary)	63	'Arrabeh, Jenin	27/8/2001	Assassinated by Israeli helicopter shells in his office in Ramallah.
Kheiriyyeh Abdul-Halim Wazzuz	70	Abu Sneineh, Hebron	24/8/2001	Died as a result of a heart attack during the Israeli shelling of the Abu Sneineh area.
Nihad Abduljabbar	64	Hebron	23/8/2001	Died as a result of a heart attack after being held for more than two hours at

Jaber				an Israeli blockade near Jaber Area in Hebron, which was under curfew.
Subha Abu Sneineh	60	Hebron	13/8/2001	Died when overwhelmed by grief when her 7-year-old niece, Sabreen Abu Sneineh, was killed on 12/8/2001 when she was shot in the head by Israelis while standing on the roof of her home.
Fathi Muhammad Al'alem	67	Salfeet	29/7/2001	Died as the result of a nerve breakdown while Israeli forces shelled Salfeet.
Fatima Hasan Al-'Abed Al-Shrafi	64	Jabalia Refugee Camp, Gaza	30/6/2001	Died at the Rafah Border Crossing after being hospitalized in Qairo. She was denied entrance into Gaza and forced to spend long days on the crossing under terrible conditions.
Fatima 'Alayan Abu Khurda	70	Bido Abu Khrabeh, Qalqilia	19/6/2001	Died as a result of injuries after being run over by an Israeli woman settler.
Ahmad Mahmoud 'Ali Al-Sheikh	81	Beit Amin, Qalqilia	17/6/2001	Run over by an Israeli settler while trying to cross the road linking Qalqilia to Nablus.
Nasra Salem Al-Malalha	65	Al-Mighraqa, Gaza	9/6/2001	Died when Israeli tanks shelled the tent she was living in, killing her and two of her (women) relatives.
'Abeed Salma Abu-'Areeban	75	Beit Frud Al-Foqa, Hebron	7/4/2001	Died after being attacked and beaten brutally by "Israeli Defense Forces", while working in his field.
Khairiyyeh Saleh 'Alawneh	70	Jaba', Jenin	29/8/2001	Died from tear gas shot by Israeli occupying forces in her village.
Mas'ud Hussein 'Ayyad	60	Gaza	13/2/2001	Assassinated in his car after an Israeli helicopter fired four shells at his car.
Muhammad Sa'eed Hannoun Ghanem	75	Seelet Al-Daher, Jenin	11/1/2001	Died from tear gas shot by Israeli occupying forces in his village.
Ibrahim Hussein Abu Al-Maghaseeb	70	Deir Al-Balah, Gaza	9/1/2001	Died after being shot in the stomach by Israeli soldiers while working in his field.
'Abdulmu'ti Al-Sab'awi	65	Gaza	18/12/2000	Died while trying to dismantle an unexploded shell shot by Israeli forces on Deir Al-Balah.
Muhammad Fahed Ma'ali	67	'Ijja, Jenin	16/12/2000	Died after being shot in the chest by Israeli soldiers on his way to work.
Hamed Jaber Muhammad Al-Qitati	69	Rafah	20/11/2000	Died from tear gas shot by Israeli occupying forces in Rafah.

'Abdallah Deiriyyeh	70	Nablus	8/11/2000	Run over by an Israeli settler near Nablus.
Ahmad 'Abdulqader Sbeitani	64	Hebron	26/10/2000	Died after Israeli soldiers forbid the ambulance he was in from taking him to the hospital.
'Abdulaziz Mahmoud Taha Abu Sneineh	70	Hebron	29/10/2000	Died when Israeli tank shells hit his home, killing him and injuring four children.

### **Israeli checkpoints mirror people's views Widad Al-Barghuthi**

The Israeli blockades that can be found on almost every road between our towns and cities, have become the places where some young Israeli soldiers exercise their creativity in torturing, humiliating and even killing people if they wish. The destiny of Palestinian children, men and women lies in the hands of those soldiers, who are equipped with modern machine guns and all that is needed to destroy a nation.

On the new but primitive road leading to Ramallah via Jalazon Refugee Camp, hundreds of people struggle across the uneven ground, through mud and rain, jumping from one stone to the other, in the effort to get to work on time. The Israeli closure of Ramallah has forced people to find new routes through the mountains, crossing on foot, exposed to inclement weather, fearful and cautious, hiding from Israeli jeeps and tanks, in order to reach their destinations. One woman walked through the mountains with her two-year-old child in her arms, carrying him home from the hospital. She was trying to carrying several bags as well as her sick child, trying to walk as quickly as possible before the Israeli tanks detected her and started to chase her. A sixty-year-old man offered to help her carry some of the bags. I offered my help as well. She was anxious and traumatized, and kept repeating the words, "Where are you (Anthony) Zinni? Come and see our reality, Zinni." One can only wonder how the high-ranking officials who try to play the role of mediators in the conflict can avoid seeing the real suffering and pain of the people? Is it because they are afraid of the truth, or afraid for themselves, or are they trying to deny that Israel is capable of inflicting so much pain?

There are thousands of stories to be told about people's everyday suffering at Israel's humiliating and deadly blockades. One needs only to stand for a minute at an Israeli blockade to pick up the voices of crying children, the laboured breathing of the elderly, and the racing heartbeats. All this goes on while Israeli soldiers swear at those passing through, who keep walking well aware of the threat of being killed at any moment, surrounded by a mixture of tear gas and dust in the air.

### **Palestinian child prisoner spend the holidays behind bars! Al-Majd Lis-Sahafeh**

As 'Eid Al-Fitr (the Moslem feast at the end of Ramadan) approaches this year, dozens of Palestinian child political prisoners are languishing in Israeli jails under terrible conditions, among Israeli criminal prisoners. Sana' Amr, 14 years old, was arrested on 20/2/2001 with her sister 'Abeer after being accused of trying to stab Israeli settlers in Hebron. Sana' is held among Israeli women criminal prisoners and faces constant harassment and attack by them. She says: "I so much wish to be able to return to school. I miss my family and friends." She is denied any family visits and her health is deteriorating, especially since she suffers from asthma. Her sister's condition isn't much better. 'Abeer is frequently beaten by prison guards, and was once brutally beaten in the prison's clinic instead of being treated. Muhammad 'Ayed Al-Quz'a, 14 years old, has been put under house arrest, accused of being a political or military leader. He lives in Shu'fat, Jerusalem.

Currently, there are 160 children held as political prisoners in Israeli jails, deprived of their parents' love and care. During these first fifteen months of the Intifada, more than 600 children have been arrested and released. The following message was sent by the child prisoners on the occasion of the feast: "Israel's efforts to destroy our spirits, violate our rights and crush our dignity will never bring peace to them nor to the world. Rather, deep wounds have been engraved within our souls which will never be forgotten."